

REMARKS

Claims 1-6 have been examined. With this amendment, Applicants add claims 7-9.

Claims 1-9 are all the claims pending in the application. Support for claims 7-9 can be found at least at page 8, lines 12-23.

I. Formalities

Applicants thank the Examiner for acknowledging the claim for foreign priority and for confirming receipt of the certified copy of the priority document.

Applicants thank the Examiner for indicating that the drawings filed on October 18, 2001, have been accepted.

Applicants thank the Examiner for initialing the reference on form PTO-1449 filed with the Information Disclosure Statement on October 18, 2001.

II. Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The Examiner has rejected claims 1 and 3 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Nakazawa et al (US 5,319,719) ["Nakazawa"]. For at least the following reasons, Applicants traverse the rejection.

Claim 1 recites a tomographic image processing method comprising "carrying out dynamic range compression processing on the image data so as to compress a high density range of the chest tomographic image" (claim 3 recites a similar feature). The Examiner contends that col. 12, lines 21-32, of Nakazawa discloses this feature.

The inventors have found that, for a chest tomographic image, compressing a high density range makes for easy diagnosis. Accordingly, non-limiting embodiments of the present invention as set forth in independent claims 1, 3 and 5 are based on this finding.

In contrast, the invention in Nakazawa increases the low density region of a radiographic image in order to compress the dynamic density range of the image (see col. 3, lines 8-52, Figs. 17 and 18). The invention in Nakazawa accomplishes this by subtracting a low frequency component of the image in order to improve the contrast of the entire image (see generally, Summary of the Invention).

As set forth in claims 1 and 3, the dynamic range compression is accomplished by compressing the high density range of the image. Thus, Applicants submit that the methods of dynamic range compression between Nakazawa and claims 1 and 3 are patentably different. Therefore, Nakazawa does not disclose or suggest compressing a high density range of the chest tomographic image.

III. Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The Examiner has rejected claims 2 and 4 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Nakazawa in view of Tsuchino *et al.* (US 5,493,622) ["Tsuchino"]. For at least the following reason, Applicants traverse the rejection.

Applicants submit that claims 2 and 4 are patentable at least by virtue of their respective dependencies.

The Examiner has rejected claim 5 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Nakazawa in view of Wang et al (US 6,424,730) [“Wang”]. For at least the following reason, Applicants traverse the rejection.

Because claim 5 recites features similar to those given above with respect to claim 1 and the Examiner’s rejection of these features is similar to that given above with respect to claim 1, Applicants submit that claim 5 is patentable for at least reasons similar to those given above with respect to claim 1.

The Examiner has also rejected claim 6 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Nakazawa in view of Wang and Tsuchino. For at least the following reason, Applicants traverse the rejection.

Applicants submit that claim 6 is patentable at least by virtue of its dependency.

IV. New Claims

With this amendment, Applicants add claims 7-9. Applicants submit that these claims are patentable at least by virtue of their respective dependencies, as well as the features set forth therein.

V. Conclusion

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Amendment Under 37 C.F.R. § 1.111
U.S. Serial No. 09/981,253

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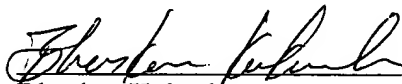
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